

International Perspectives on
Early Childhood Education and Development 6

Linda Miller
Carmen Dalli
Mathias Urban *Editors*

Early Childhood Grows Up

Towards a Critical Ecology
of the Profession

 Springer

Early Childhood Grows Up

International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development

Volume 6

Series Editors

Professor Marilyn Flear, *Monash University, Australia*

Professor Ingrid Pramling-Samuelsson, *Gothenburg University, Sweden*

Editorial Board

Professor Jane Bone, *University of Auckland, Australia*

Professor Yukiko Matsukawa, *Chubu University, Japan*

Professor Rebeca Mejía Arauz, *ITESO, Mexico*

Professor Nirmala Rao, *University of Hong Kong, China*

Professor Anne B. Smith, *Formerly from the Children's Issues Centre, University of Otago, New Zealand*

Professor Collette Tayler, *University of Melbourne, Australia*

Professor Eva Johansson, *University of Stavanger, Norway*

Professor Lilian G. Katz, *Ph.D. Professor Emerita of Early Childhood Education, University of Illinois, USA*

Early childhood education in many countries has been built upon a strong tradition of a materially rich and active play-based pedagogy and environment. Yet what has become visible within the profession, is, essentially a Western view of childhood, preschool education and school education.

It is timely that a series of books be published which present a broader view of early childhood education. This series seeks to provide an international perspective on early childhood education. In particular, the books published in this series:

- Examine how learning is organized across a range of cultures, particularly indigenous communities
- Make visible a range of ways in which early childhood pedagogy is framed and enacted across countries, including the majority poor countries
- Critique how particular forms of knowledge are constructed in curriculum within and across countries
- Explore policy imperatives which shape and have shaped how early childhood education is enacted across countries
- Examine how early childhood education is researched locally and globally
- Examine the theoretical informants driving pedagogy and practice, and seek to find alternative perspectives from those that dominate many Western heritage countries
- Critique assessment practices and consider a broader set of ways of measuring children's learning
- Examine concept formation from within the context of country-specific pedagogy and learning outcomes

The series covers theoretical works, evidence-based pedagogical research, and international research studies. The series also covers a broad range of countries, including majority poor countries. Classical areas of interest, such as play, the images of childhood, and family studies, will also be examined. However, the focus is critical and international (not Western-centric).

Linda Miller · Carmen Dalli · Mathias Urban
Editors

Early Childhood Grows Up

Towards a Critical Ecology of the Profession

Foreword by Peter Moss

 Springer

Editors

Prof. Linda Miller
North End 120
SG8 5NZ Royston, Herts
Bassingbourn
United Kingdom
l.k.miller@open.ac.uk

Prof. Carmen Dalli
Institute for Early Childhood Studies
Victoria University of Wellington
PO Box 600
Wellington 6140
New Zealand
carmen.dalli@vuw.ac.nz

Dr. Mathias Urban
Cass School of Education and Communities
University of East London
Water Lane
E15 4LZ London
United Kingdom
m.urban@uel.ac.uk

ISBN 978-94-007-2717-5

e-ISBN 978-94-007-2718-2

DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-2718-2

Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg London New York

Library of Congress Control Number: 2011942268

© Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2012

No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, microfilming, recording or otherwise, without written permission from the Publisher, with the exception of any material supplied specifically for the purpose of being entered and executed on a computer system, for exclusive use by the purchaser of the work.

Printed on acid-free paper

Springer is part of Springer Science+Business Media (www.springer.com)

Foreword

Early childhood education and care may be on the up at present, attracting the favourable attention of national and international policy makers and politicians, identified as a ‘good’ sector of the welfare state deserving of expansion and investment. Yet it seems to me that its apparent healthy exterior hides many of the prevailing ills of our time, which, if ignored, may make the current attention something of a mixed blessing. What ills do I mean?

First is the technoscience, which as Edgar Morin puts it,

has invaded every tissue of the developed societies, implanting at an organisational level the logic of the artificial machine. This logic has penetrated the sphere of daily life and repressed the democratic power of citizens in favour of the experts and specialists (Morin & Kern, 1999, p. 68).

This logic of the artificial machine is fragmented, compartmentalised, reductionist; it is taken up with efficiency, predictability, calculability and specialisation; it avoids or seeks to control context and complexity; and it cedes our responsibility.

The second ill is the primacy given to an extreme instrumental rationality, ‘pre-occupied with calculation and quantification, with the relationship between inputs and outputs, with finding the most economical application of means to a given end’ (Taylor, 1995). It is a prime example of what Lyotard (1984) terms ‘performativity’, which Stephen Ball defines as ‘a disciplinary system of judgements, classifications and targets towards which schools and teachers must strive and through which they are evaluated’ (1998, p. 190). This instrumental rationality is focused intently on defining and implementing an unwavering relationship between prescribed practices and procedures (often given the shorthand of ‘quality’) and prescribed outcomes (for example, learning or developmental goals). Process, everyday life, the unexpected, which account for so much of life and make life so often worth living, have no place here.

The third ill, expressed in the words of historian Carlo Ginzburg (1998), is ‘constantly being offered solutions before we have asked the critical questions’. Putting technical practice first, obsessed by the technical question ‘what works?’, and assuming we can contract questions and answers to experts and specialists, education is drained of its essential political and ethical dimensions, dimensions that are needed to first generate then begin to find answers to key critical questions.

Questions such as: What is our image of the child? Of the educator and preschool? How do we understand concepts such as education, care, learning and knowledge? What is the purpose of education? What are fundamental values of education? What do we want for our children, here and now and in the future?

Fourth, there is the ascendancy of economic thinking in an age of resurgent neo-liberalism. This resurgence has brought about a one-dimensional way of thinking, with the collapse of the social into an overwhelming economic sphere, a process vividly described by Nikolas Rose:

Social government must be restructured in the name of an economic logic... (and) the relation of the social and economic is rethought. All aspects of social behaviour are now reconceptualised along economic lines – as calculative actions undertaken through the universal human faculty of choice. Choice is to be seen as dependent upon a relative assessment of costs and benefits of ‘investments’ in the light of environmental contingencies (Rose, 1999, pp. 141–142).

Economic thinking in early childhood education takes two main forms. First, the reduction of early childhood education to a simple matter of economic investment, justified in terms of delivering a certain level of economic return, typified by the oft quoted (and in my view dubious) claims that a dollar invested in early childhood education giving returns of \$6 upwards. Second, the commodification, privatisation and marketisation of early childhood education: In this way of thinking, early childhood education becomes a tradable commodity to be provided by businesses competing in the market place. The parent is a customer, engaged in an act of private consumption, an autonomous subject (‘autonomous’ understood as meaning independent of others, a separate entity with complete control over personal decisions) responsible for managing her own risks, in this case purchasing care and education to meet the needs of herself and her child, but at the same time relieved of responsibility for others beyond her immediate family. The child is the object of the service, to be cared for, perhaps to be educated, the passive recipient of the service purchased by his or her parents.

Of course, this is a selection of current ills, there are many to choose from, and there is much inter-connectedness and overlap. But I think they give a flavour of my thinking; as things are going we are in danger of governing children more, relying on early childhood to fix the deep structural problems in our societies, and imposing standardisation at the expense of plurality and critical self-awareness. If, as Morin suggests, the challenge facing our endangered species and ravaged planet is to think in context and think complexity, the way much early childhood education and care is going today will not pass muster.

Equally disturbing, important relationships are badly out of kilter and early childhood education is caught up in this wider process too: the relationship between mankind and the environment; between prosperity and well-being; between coherence and diversity; and between poetry and prose. Another cue from Edgar Morin: Human life, he argues, is a mixture of prose and poetry, both necessary, both woven together, the prose side encompassing work, survival and aiming at targets, the main site for the practical, utilitarian and technical; while poetry is a way of life involving participation, love, eagerness and joy. But today the relationship between the two is

quite unbalanced. Having separated prose and poetry, modern western civilisation has relegated poetry to private life. We need a powerful counter-offensive of poetry, and not least in education, at a time when human beings spend most of their lives surviving and where the future on offer seems to be ever more prose as we look forward to more years of paid work in an ever more competitive economy where the constant cry of the manager is more productivity and the constant cry of government and business is to compete better and consume more (see also Veà Vecchi, 2010, for a discussion of the place of ‘poetic languages’ in early childhood education).

It is in this somewhat dismal context that I welcome this book, as another sign of a growing movement of resistance and diversity. With its cross-national perspective, it makes us think of context and diversity, that perhaps not everywhere and everyone has the same values, goals, traditions and concepts – though some of that rich diversity may be lost by having to work in the modern *lingua franca* of English, not the first language of seven contributors. We are led to think too about different images and understandings of the child, the centre and the pedagogical work that takes place in it.

The book’s focus on the everyday – relating as it does to some of the work done by an international team of researchers collaborating on a project titled *A Day in the Life of an Early Years Practitioner* – leads us to think about process and the meaning of living part of one’s life, whether child or adult, in early childhood centres. It raises the critical question behind my colleague Alison Clark’s Mosaic approach (Clark & Moss, 2001) to listening to young children, ‘what does it mean to be in this place?’ It acknowledges, too, the irreducible element of uncertainty when working with children and adults (and not just in nurseries one might add), reminding us that the concept of outcomes may have some use only if it allows for the surprising and unexpected, not just the predefined and normative.

The book delves into critical questions about pedagogy, relationships and professionalism. And the inclusion in one chapter of the term ‘new public education’ encourages us to contest the dominance of privatisation and marketisation, the ‘new private education’, and to open up for thinking what a new public education might mean and what it might offer our strained, fractured and unjust societies. One element of that ‘new public education’, for me, would be the valuing of collective over individual choice in many key areas, thus bringing democracy into the nursery as a foundational value and practice.

I have been critical of the technical, the managerial, the economic. Each though has its place, but it is a sign of a democratic, flourishing and just society that that place is debated and that the technical, the managerial and the economic are put at the service of richer and more important purposes – in the back seat, not the driving seat, tools at the disposal of the workforce not the other way round. Which brings me to a final observation: The growing attention given to early childhood education and care is bringing a welcome attention also to the workforce in these services, and not before time given the low levels of education and often disgracefully low pay deemed sufficient for many members of this workforce, in particular for those working with children under 3 years and in so-called childcare services. But – despite this attention and the higher levels of initial and continuing education it is giving some

rise to – unless the technical, the managerial and the economic are reined in, and unless more space is made for the discussion of professionalisation, we may end up having achieved only a transition from the worker as substitute mother to the worker as lower or higher grade technician. I hope this book contributes both to the space needed for that discussion and to the discussions that take place in that space.

London, UK

Peter Moss*

References

- Ball, S. J. (1998). Performativity and fragmentation in ‘postmodern schooling’. In J. Carter (Ed.), *Postmodernity and the fragmentation of welfare* (pp. 187–203). London: Routledge.
- Clark, A., & Moss, P. (2001). *Listening to young children: The Mosaic approach*. London: National Children’s Bureau.
- Ginzburg, C. (1998). *Ledtrådar: Essäer om konst, förbjuden kunskap och dold historia (Threads. Essays on art, forbidden knowledge and hidden history)*. Stockholm: Häften for Kritiska Studier.
- Liotard, J.-F. (1984). *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Morin, E., & Kern, A. B. (1999). *Homeland earth: A manifesto for the new millennium*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Rose, N. (1999). *Powers of freedom: Reframing political thought*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, C. (1995). *Philosophical arguments*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Vecchi, V. (2010). *Art and creativity in Reggio Emilia: Exploring the role and potential of ateliers in early childhood education*. London: Routledge.

* **Peter Moss** is Professor of Early Childhood Provision at the Institute of Education, University of London. His academic interests include services for children and their workforces, the relationship between care, employment and gender, democracy in education, and social pedagogy. He coordinates an international network on parental leave policy and research.

Acknowledgements

This book has been an exciting and stimulating project that has pulled together the work of colleagues spread across the globe. We thank each contributor for their enthusiasm, hard work and collegiality.

In particular, we would like to acknowledge the contribution of the six early childhood practitioners who shared their perspectives and experiences with us, put up with our cameras and questions, and provided the basis for what has become a fascinating example of ‘practice-based evidence’ for the day-to-day ecology of the early childhood profession. Without Anna (Sweden), Bette (New Zealand), Josie (Australia), Julie (England), Maija (Finland) and Frau Müller (Germany) this book would not have been possible.

Our thanks go to the *European Early Childhood Education Research Association* (EECERA) at whose annual conferences this book was conceived.

Finally, we thank Susan Kaiser at the Jessie Hetherington Centre for Educational Research at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, for her invaluable assistance in putting the manuscript together. Without her impeccable eye for detail, and her unfailing good humour, our role as editors would have been much harder.

Linda Miller
Carmen Dalli
Mathias Urban

Contents

Part I Professionalism in Local and Cross-National Contexts: Towards a Critical Ecology of the Profession

- 1 Early Childhood Grows Up: Towards a Critical Ecology
of the Profession 3**
Carmen Dalli, Linda Miller, and Mathias Urban
- 2 Relationships, Reflexivity and Renewal: Professional
Practice in Action in an Australian Children’s Centre 21**
Christine Woodrow
- 3 Leading and Managing in an Early Years Setting in England . . . 37**
Linda Miller, Carrie Cable, and Gill Goodliff
- 4 Acting as a Professional in a Finnish Early Childhood
Education Context 55**
Kirsti Karila and Jarmo Kinos
- 5 The Uncertain Expert: A Case Study from Germany 71**
Mathias Urban
- 6 A Constant Juggle for Balance: A Day in the Life
of a New Zealand Kindergarten Teacher 87**
Carmen Dalli
- 7 Working with a Democratic Curriculum: The Swedish
Case Study 103**
Marja Kuisma and Anette Sandberg

Part II International Perspectives on Professionalism

- 8 Radical Reconstructions? Early Childhood Workforce
Profiles in Changing European Early Childhood Education
and Care Systems 119**
Pamela Oberhuemer

9 Childcare Professionalism in Flanders: An Inside–Outside Perspective 131
Jan Peeters

10 A Need, a Desire, a Shared Responsibility: Professional Development for a New Public Education 145
Irene Balaguer Felip

11 A Profession Speaking and Thinking for Itself 157
Mathias Urban and Carmen Dalli

Index 177

About the Editors

Carmen Dalli is Professor of Early Childhood Education and Director of the Institute for Early Childhood Studies at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. Her research combines an interest in professionalism in the early years with a focus on policy and pedagogical issues and the intersection of these with child development knowledge. She has a particular interest in group-based early childhood education and care provisions for children aged under 3 years.

Linda Miller is Emeritus Professor, Early Years at the Open University, United Kingdom. Her research interests centre on workforce policy issues and the professionalisation of the early years workforce in England, where she has been involved in national consultations and government working parties. Linda has published widely in this field, most recently, a Critical Issues in the Early Years Series for SAGE publishers.

Mathias Urban is Reader in Education at the Cass School of Education and Communities, University of East London, United Kingdom. His research interests unfold around questions of quality and professionalism in working with young children, families and communities in diverse socio-cultural contexts, diversity and equality, and participatory evaluation. He has a particular interest in international policy and professional epistemology.

About the Authors

Irene Balaguer Felip is President of Associació de Mestres Rosa Sensat, the Barcelona-based Teachers' Association founded in 1965 in response to 40 years of fascist dictatorship in Spain. Her main interests focus on teacher education and the quality of education for all ages, especially for children from 0 to 6. She is committed to defending public education as a right for all children with no discrimination of any kind.

Carrie Cable was a Senior Lecturer in Education at the Open University until 2011 and is now an Educational Consultant. Her research interests include English as an additional language and bilingualism, and for 3 years she was director of a major research project examining the learning and teaching of languages in primary schools.

Gill Goodliff is a Senior Lecturer and Head of Qualifications for Early Years in the Department of Education at The Open University, United Kingdom. Her research interests include the professional identities of early years practitioners and expressions of spirituality by children aged under 3 years.

Kirsti Karila is Professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of Tampere, Finland. She has conducted research projects concerning professionalism, professional identities, professional interaction and parent–practitioner collaboration in early childhood education. Recently, she has examined the new curricular practices in Finnish early childhood education and care.

Jarmo Kinos's first profession was as a kindergarten teacher. He subsequently worked as a lecturer and researcher at the University of Turku and is currently acting professor at the University of Tampere, Finland. His main research interests lie in history, professionalism and pedagogical practices of early childhood education. His latest research topic deals with the academisation and scientification of early childhood education in Finnish universities.

Marja Kuisma worked for many years as a Senior Lecturer in curriculum studies and special education at Uppsala University in Sweden before she retired in February 2011. Her research interest in the links between theory and practical studies in teacher education focused on teacher thinking and professionalism.

Pamela Oberhuemer was based for many years at the State Institute of Early Childhood Research in Munich, Germany, and currently works as a freelance researcher and journal editor. Her research foregrounds cross-national perspectives relating to early childhood education and care systems, curricular frameworks, and initial and continuing professional development. Her most recent book (with Inge Schreyer and Michelle Neuman) on the 27 European Union countries is *Professionals in Early Childhood Education and Care Systems – European Profiles and Perspectives*.

Jan Peeters is the co-ordinator of the Research and Resource Centre for Early Childhood Education and Care of the Department of Social Welfare Studies at Ghent University (Belgium). Together with colleagues from different countries, he founded ‘DECET’, the European Network on working around diversity in the early years and ‘Children in Europe’, a network of 17 magazines in ECE. He is on the board of ISSA, an Eastern European and Middle Asian network of 27 countries. His main topics of interest are the under threes, gender, diversity, and professionalism in the early years.

Anette Sandberg is Professor of Early Childhood Education at Mälardalen University, Sweden. Her current research concerns preschool teachers’ competence, and preschool as the context for language development in children. She is also involved in two international research projects *Preschool teachers’ views on children’s learning* and *Support for preschool teachers’ professional development*.

Christine Woodrow is Associate Professor at the Centre for Education Research in the School of Education at the University of Western Sydney in Australia. Her particular research interests include early childhood policy, leadership and constructions of professional identity. She is passionately interested in the role early childhood can play in community building and social change.

List of Acronyms

BA/BTeach	Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Teaching
BUPL	Danish Federation of Early Childhood Teachers and Youth Educators
CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CETL	Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning
CWDC	Children's Workforce Development Council
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfEE	Department of Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
ECE	Early childhood education
ECEC	Early childhood education and care
ECEGO	Expertisecentrum Ervaringsgericht Onderwijs
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EJE	Éducateur jeunes enfants
ELGs	Early Learning Goals
EPPE	Effective Provision of Pre-school Education
ERO	Education Review Office
EU	European Union
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
EYP	Early Years Professional
EYPS	Early Years Professional Status
GBP	Great Britain Pounds
GDP	Gross domestic product
GDR	German Democratic Republic
HMT	Her Majesty's Treasury
IQF	Integrated Qualifications Framework
ISCED	International standard classification of education
ITERS	Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale
<i>Lpfö98/06</i>	Swedish Ministry of Education 1998/2006
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
QCA	Qualifications Framework

SEEPRO	Systems of early education/care and professionalisation
SEN	Special educational needs
STAKES	National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Part I
Professionalism in Local and
Cross-National Contexts: Towards a
Critical Ecology of the Profession

Chapter 1

Early Childhood Grows Up: Towards a Critical Ecology of the Profession

Setting the Scene

Carmen Dalli, Linda Miller, and Mathias Urban

1.1 Introduction

This book makes two key arguments. The first is that early childhood education has grown up; the second is that we need to contemplate a new future for early childhood education – one in which the profession is marked by a critical ecology.

1.2 Our First Argument: Early Childhood Education Has Grown Up

By growing up we mean that from a sector that historically has been the Cinderella of the education system (Dalli, 1993; Opper, 1993) – undervalued and underfunded – in recent years early childhood education has slowly but surely travelled up the priority list of national policy agendas across the globe (Miller & Cable, 2011; Moss, 2008, 2010; OECD, 2006). As a result, there has been an unprecedented interest in the professionalisation of the early years workforce, often linked to the argument that the quality of early childhood services, and the improvement of opportunities for children and families, are associated with more highly trained staff (OECD, 2006). National pedagogical and regulatory practices have been introduced in many countries in an attempt to develop and enhance professional practice and there has been an expansion of opportunities to obtain higher level qualifications.

C. Dalli (✉)

Institute for Early Childhood Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington 6140,
New Zealand
e-mail: carmen.dalli@vuw.ac.nz

L. Miller (✉)

Faculty of Education and Language Studies, The Open University, Milton Keynes MK76AA, UK
e-mail: l.k.miller@open.ac.uk

M. Urban (✉)

Cass School of Education and Communities, University of East London, London E15 4LZ, UK
e-mail: m.urban@uel.ac.uk